

Sat [Lifting the Media Black Out on the Greens](#)
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A CANDID INTERVIEW WITH GREEN'S VICTORIA RUNNING CANDIDATE

Adam Saab is new guy on the election scene. Not surprisingly, people are curious to know, “what’s this dude really about anyway?” As the Green Party’s candidate for the electoral district of Victoria, he’s got his work cut out for him.

Diane Walsh: I don’t think I’m alone in feeling a bit of angst as a journalist taking up a conversation with a Green Party candidate. In the past I experienced a sense of hesitation when writing for a *Liberal* or *Conservative* leaning press—not wishing to sound like I’m promoting the Greens—in any way. God forbid! But how else can the media make information available to the public at large if not by giving premium air-time to those willing to speak in-depth about election controversies?

Adam Saab: I think you are right to pick up on the fact that there continues to be a certain tone taken with news reporting on the Green Party. Without referring to specific journalists or media organizations, I would agree that there is a hesitancy to give credit or even thorough coverage as well as some degree of accepted patronizing that takes place. I am optimistic, however, that this will improve to some degree in this election.

DW: What do you propose to do—in Victoria—to combat attitude, if you agree that there is one? When it’s clearly, the case ordinary people on the street can be seen supporting the Greens with some enthusiasm.

AS: To a large degree, it is business as usual. We are gaining ground every election and have made significant advances even in the first two weeks of this election. Our campaign here in Victoria, and I have spoken with my core campaign team about this, is dedicated to 1) professional and positive campaigning, and 2) campaigning that is focused on educating voters rather than attacking the other candidates and parties. The irony here is that it seems somewhat like a party is not taken seriously unless they play the traditional political games. But, we would see that as a loss for us, not a win.

DW: What precisely can you tell Victorians about the Green policy platform? Please don't speak in jargon and sound-bites. Name these points so that people can bite into it (I mean that in the nicest possible way!).

AS: My key issues in this upcoming election are food security, water 'as a right', childcare and city infrastructure funding.

Food Security will ensure that as energy prices go up and food shortages increase, Victoria and Vancouver Island will be able to be self-sustaining. This means assisting local farmers and protecting agricultural land. It also means supporting the farmer directed Canadian Wheat Board which is an example of farmers cooperating to gain a strong voice in the grain business.

Protecting our water supply should follow the same path as protecting and maintaining our food supply. On Vancouver Island we have a limited supply of water and our increasing population will cause an even greater strain. Water is a renewable resource, but we can easily consume water quicker than it can be replenished. This does not mean that everyone must use less water (although conservation is an important issue), but we must ensure efficient delivery of water to our homes and maintain consistent maintenance of our pipes. These changes will be made available to cities by providing them with the 1% of the GST the Conservative Party refused them. Making water a human right will go a long way in insuring these issues are addressed properly from all levels of government.

On a personal note, I have a sister in Victoria with a 5-year-old child and a 6-month-old baby. She has placed her children on a waiting list for childcare at conception so that she can pay over \$1000.00 a month for childcare at the University of Victoria. By providing universal childcare, we will ensure affordable childcare for young families and accommodate single parent families that can not afford childcare.

Funding for city infrastructure will be provided by the 1% of the GST devoted to cities for new infrastructure. Cities have many needs, but by giving them a break on infrastructure cost we will be giving them the flexibility to address domestic issues such as poverty, drug abuse and homelessness. How these issues are addressed is of great concern to the Green Party. This is why I will work closely with Philippe Lucas and Sonya Chandler to ensure that my actions as a federal Green party MP will assist Victoria at the local level.

DW: Why have you decided to run? It's a difficult district to take away from the NDP, no?

AS: I have decided to run because I am confident that I can be an effective MP who works hard for Victorians and all Canadians. And, I believe that I can serve the best interests of Victorians by working with Elizabeth May and the rest of the Green Party team including Sonya Chandler and Philippe Lucas. I really believe this is a party of the future with a positive message and, as a relatively young candidate, I represent that optimism for what we can do in Canada and around the world.

DW: What you say to people who claim that Green or that is a vote for the Greens only splits the left and makes it easier for the Conservatives to get in?

Quite simply, I disagree. We continue to have discussions within our party to analyze the effects we are having on politics in Canada. And, when we look at the membership of the Green Party we see that members come from all different backgrounds – even in my campaign team here in Victoria there are former members of the Reform Party, the Progressive Conservatives, and the NDP. When we look at who is voting for us we see that support comes from all the other parties – in fact, I just saw a poll today that showed the Conservative support dropping in an area and corresponding support for the Greens going up. None of this should be surprising – as Greens we have always pointed to our conservative fiscal policies and our progressive social policies and said that we are “neither left, nor right, but out front.”

DW: What does your *youth* bring to the picture?

AS: I touched on this somewhat in an earlier question. I understand the Green Party to be very forward-looking and concerned about responsible government that considers the long-term effects of policies and practices. As a relatively young candidate, I not only have energy and passion for the job as an MP, but am representative of a party that looks to the future. I consider the current economic problems, Canada's aging population, the troublesome practices in our resource management, and climate change and seek to plan for the future I would like to see. I can't help but be inspired to get active and work hard to ensure this future is filled with health and prosperity for my fellow Canadians.

DW: Are you in favour of working collaboratively with well-stationed reps of the NDP here in Victoria? What is your view of partisanship?

AS: I, along with Elizabeth May and my fellow Green candidates across the country have committed to doing politics differently. We are dedicated to being professional and civil in the House of Commons and on the campaign trail. In addition, we would like to see our electoral system reformed to ensure parties can foster co-operation and collaboration as much as possible – i.e. through a more proportional system of representation. Honestly, though, until the system is changed, it is very difficult to work with other parties. We are trying to do what we can – for example with the agreement between Elizabeth May and Stéphane Dion and Elizabeth's continued offers to speak with Jack Layton – but it is still a work in progress.

Here at home in Victoria, I am certainly open to speaking with members of any other political party and investigating ways we can work together to find some practical solutions to problems we all identify. I know there are many areas where we can agree and work together for the good of Victoria. Partisanship has gone too far and it will take some bold and creative leadership to move beyond it in Canada. So, I am pleased to work with Elizabeth May who understands the importance of trans-partisan co-operation. I intend to do my best to find practical ways we can overcome our differences and find some common solutions here in Victoria.

DW: What is your view of the Dion-May pact in hindsight? What do you say the comment made that Dion is 'more green', than the Greens?

AS: I have always been supportive of Elizabeth May's endeavours to move beyond our current, out-dated electoral system through collaboration and co-operation. I think the May-Dion agreement is one such example of this progressive thinking. Although there is a tradition in Canadian politics to not run against the leader of a party, it was also understood that this agreement would have symbolic meaning. That is, that the Greens are concerned about the Conservatives' lack of understanding regarding the connection between a health environment and our well-being and prosperity. And, that we believe Dion and the Liberals are somewhat more in tune with this reality.

Of course, and Elizabeth May has said this repeatedly, we have much to criticize the Liberal Party for. Although we may believe that Dion will do a better job than Harper, we believe Dion will be quite constrained by the Liberal Party machine and unable to bring about the needed reforms. Both Dion and the Liberal Party have a record that very much demonstrates the limitations of their old way of doing politics.

DW: Are you going door-to-door?

AS: I am certainly going door-to-door. One of the best ways to understand the values and priorities of Victorians is to get out and talk to them. So, I am doing my best to get out and knock on doors in all areas of the city. Thankfully, I have a team of volunteers who are helping me – I simply cannot knock on all doors this election.

AS: What does your campaign look like?

My campaign is run entirely by hard-working and creative volunteers. We are not able to run a fully-funded campaign (i.e. \$80,000) in this election so rely upon volunteers to ensure we are able to communicate effectively with the residents of Victoria. As I have mentioned, we are committed to a positive campaign that is filled with forward-looking, optimistic policies. Our goal is to run a campaign that reflects our values and policies by being effective, efficient, and always positive.

DW: Which societies around town have you approached?

AS: I have been in communication with the Values-Based Business Network where I have developed a first hand understanding of the challenges small business owners face. These are businesses strive to produce products and services derived from fairly traded and sustainable materials from local sources. However, I have heard concerns about the lack of infrastructure and supply markets in Canada. I have heard concerns about the difficulty of quantifying many valuable aspects of their business such as long-term staff who earn higher wages, providing paid time off work for both holiday and volunteer time and especially in reducing the costs to society by participating in a conservator society and ensuring a healthy and livable environment for their workers and communities.

Despite these challenges I believe these are the businesses which will thrive in the new green economy to come. And I believe these challenges can be met through innovative measures of progress and government incentives to encourage businesses and individuals alike to include contributions to society beyond the acquisition of wealth.

DW: Is it a local based campaign or an Ottawa remote version campaign?

AS: It is local. We have a team of volunteers from Victoria working hard to ensure we communicate with as many residents as possible. We have rented a campaign office on Fort St., designed and printed the campaign literature, collected names of supporters, put up campaign signs, called potential supporters, etc. all from our office here in Victoria. We are relying on the generous donations of Victorians to make this all happen.

DW: Are you bilingual?

AS: I am not bilingual but come from a family speaking three languages. My father immigrated to Canada from Beirut Lebanon and is fluent in Arabic, French and English.

DW: What is your worldview? How would describe your personal politics?

AS: I have had many privileges in my life, not the least of which has been a loving family who provides me with character challenges coupled with unconditional support. It is these values of compassion and respect which make up my worldview.

My personal politics stem from these values into a principled understanding of civil service and responsible government. There is no other line of work with higher standards than civil service and should be reserved for only the most selfless of individuals.

DW: Where do you believe your biggest support base lies?

AS: It is somewhat tough to say. As I mentioned before, our analyses of our supporters always turns up a wide-range of former political commitments – from right-wing to left-wing. I know we are very strongly supported by young people, but it seems more and more elderly people are supporting us. It seems those who are especially concerned about the future consider us the best option. Young people seem to consider the country they will inherit and elderly people seem to consider the country they will leave behind.

The biggest things I find, though, are that people of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds are receptive to Green politics. Our challenge very much lies in educating citizens about the values and policies of the Green Party. We do not have to make excuses for broken promises or explain a history of inaction on a certain issue. We simply have to communicate that there is a better way – that we can work together for a Canada that is a more healthy, responsible, and effective leader in the world.